

The Wartime Diary of Eliza Beale

Second World War Evacuee

Dear Diary,

Thursday 31st August 1939



Today has been horrible.

This afternoon, Mum told me that the government is worried about the threat of war so they have issued an evacuation notice. London is no longer safe so we need to move to the countryside. Can you believe it, diary? I can't.

At first, I thought that we would all be going together and I got excited about the idea of a family holiday. However, one look at Mum made me realise that I was wrong. George and I have packed a pillowcase each that we've filled with clothes and a few biscuits for the train. He's too young to understand what's happening and is getting excited about the 'adventure' that Mum told him we were going on. Lucky George.

My mind is spinning and I can't sleep. I tried to get more information from Mum (like how long we are going away for or where we are going) but my questions were met with a sad silence. All I know is that we must go to Waterloo station tomorrow morning.

Eliza



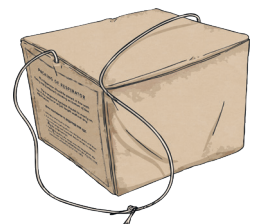
Dear Diary,

Friday 1st September 1939 – morning



I'm writing from the train station. It feels as though my world has been turned upside down. I've got a big tag dangling around my neck as if I'm a piece of luggage. The tag even says my full name on it: 'Elizabeth Beale'. I tried explaining to the woman who put it around my neck that everyone calls me Eliza but she just looked at me sympathetically and shooed me away. I've decided to hide it underneath my gas mask box because then people will have to ask me for my name instead of reading it from a label.

There are hundreds of us here. Our teachers from school are sitting with us but our parents weren't allowed any farther than the station barrier. It was so difficult saying goodbye.



Apparently, our school will be getting on the next train but we don't know how long we will have to wait. I'm so hungry. I'm regretting giving George my biscuits now but he looked like he needed cheering up. At least he's stopped telling me that he doesn't want to go on an adventure any more.

Eliza

Dear Diary,

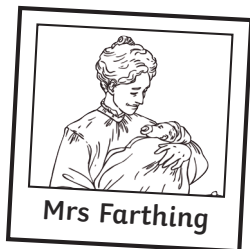
Friday 1st September 1939 – evening



I can't believe that it was only this morning when we last spoke.

The train journey was horrible. We were all packed in so tightly. Whenever I've been on a train before, I've felt ill but this time was so much worse. At one point, I thought I was going to be sick into my pillowcase.

After many hours, we arrived in a small town. We were taken to the town hall and given a drink. Then, adults started coming in and picking children to take home. Luckily, George and I were picked together. The lady who took us with her is called Mrs Farthing. By the time we had walked to her house, it was very dark; poor George was struggling to stay awake.



Mrs Farthing

When we arrived, Mrs Farthing told us all about her two sons and her husband (Mr Farthing) who was outside tending to the animals. It turns out that Mr and Mrs Farthing live on a farm! They've got cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, two horses and a donkey! She says that we can help with the animals tomorrow.



Mr Farthing

I'm curled up in bed trying to sleep at the moment. George is asleep in the bed next to me. We both had a little cry when we realised that Mum couldn't tuck us in; it's really difficult being away from her but at least we have each other. I've promised George that I will look after him.

Eliza

